IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for write protecting a storage medium ~~of~~ that includes game data for operating a gaming machine such that the game data is not alterable through use of the circuitry or programming of the gaming machine, ~~the storage medium containing critical game data for operating the gaming machine,~~ the storage medium including a data register capable of receiving external data when at least one load condition of the data register is enabled, the method comprising:

decoding an address of the storage medium selected by an external device; and

if the selected address matches an address of the data register, disabling ~~more than~~ at least one load condition of the data register.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one load condition includes a write enable input of the storage medium.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one load condition includes card enable inputs of the storage medium.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one load condition includes a plurality of load conditions such that the data register is capable of receiving the external data when a plurality of load conditions are enabled, and wherein the step of disabling the at least one load condition includes disabling ~~two~~ one or more of the plurality of load conditions.

5. (Currently Amended) A method of disabling loading of external data into a data register of a storage medium of a gaming machine, such that the data register is not alterable through use of the circuitry or programming of the gaming machine, the storage medium containing critical game data for operating the gaming machine, the method comprising:

decoding an address of the storage medium selected by an external device; and

if the selected address matches an address of the data register, disabling at least one ~~two~~ load condition ~~conditions~~ of the data register.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the at least one load condition includes a write enable input of the storage medium.

7. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the at least one load condition includes a card enable input of the storage medium.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, wherein the at least one load condition includes a plurality of load conditions, and wherein the step of disabling the at least one load condition includes disabling one or more of the plurality of load conditions.

9. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for write protecting a storage medium of a gaming machine, the storage medium containing critical game data for operating the gaming machine, the storage medium including a data register capable of receiving external data when at least one load condition of the data register is enabled, the apparatus comprising:

means for decoding an address of the storage medium selected by an external device; and

means for disabling ~~two or more of~~ the at least one load condition of the data register if the selected address matches an address of the data register such that the critical game data is not alterable through use of the circuitry or programming of the gaming machine.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the at least one load condition includes a write enable input of the storage medium.

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the at least one load condition includes card enable inputs of the storage medium.

12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the at least one load condition includes a plurality of load conditions such that the data register is capable of receiving the external data when the plurality of load conditions are enabled, and wherein the means for disabling the load condition disables one or more of the plurality of load conditions.

13. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for disabling loading of external data into a data register of a storage medium of a gaming machine, the storage medium containing critical game data for operating the gaming machine, the apparatus comprising:

means for decoding an address of the storage medium selected by an external device; and

means for disabling at least one ~~two~~ load condition ~~conditions~~ of the data register if the selected address matches an address of the data register such that the critical game data is not alterable through use of the circuitry or programming of the gaming machine.

14. (Currently Amended) A control system for operating a gaming machine, comprising:

a processor;

a storage medium for storing game critical data and including a data register capable of receiving external data when at least one load condition of the data register is enabled; and

write protection logic for decoding an address of the storage medium selected by an external device and, if the selected address matches an address of the data register, disabling ~~all~~ the at least one load condition ~~conditions~~ of the data register such that the critical game data is not alterable through use of the circuitry or programming of the gaming machine.

15. (Original) The control system of claim 14, wherein the storage medium includes removable flash memory.

16. (Original) The control system of claim 14, wherein the at least one load condition includes a write enable input of the storage medium.

17. (Original) The control system of claim 14, wherein the at least one load condition includes card enable inputs of the storage medium.

18. (Original) The control system of claim 14, wherein the at least one load condition includes a plurality of load conditions such that the data register is capable of receiving the external data when the plurality of load conditions are enabled, and wherein the means for disabling the load condition disables one or more of the plurality of load conditions.

19. (New) The method of claim 4, wherein the step of disabling the at least one load condition includes disabling one of the plurality of load conditions.

20. (New) The method of claim 4, wherein the step of disabling the at least one load condition includes disabling two of the plurality of load conditions.

21. (New) The method of claim 8, wherein the step of disabling the at least one load condition includes disabling one of the plurality of load conditions.

22. (New) The method of claim 8, wherein the step of disabling the at least one load condition includes disabling two of the plurality of load conditions.